

25 May 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
on the Occasion of Africa Day**

On 25 May each year, the nations and peoples of Africa commemorate "Africa Day" in remembrance of the historic commitment made by their leaders, in 1963, to secure Africa's independence in the framework of the Organization of African Unity.

Africans have reason to celebrate the unity of their continent, forged in an ancient and rich history; a history that gives us all a profound sense of our common humanity.

Africa's diverse peoples, cultures and diaspora have provided the world with a wealth of talents. Today, Africa comprises many vibrant States devoted to the values and principles of the United Nations. The continent is witnessing its strongest economic growth in decades.

The transformation of the OAU into a dynamic African Union is a reflection of the continent's political maturity and determination to assume greater responsibility for its own destiny.

If fully supported, Africa can develop its rich potential and free its people from abject poverty, disease and political instability.

I strongly encourage African States to continue on the path of progress. Sustainable peace and development, respect for human rights and the rule of law are indispensable.

The magnitude of the challenges Africa faces is overwhelming. It is our moral obligation to ensure that this burden is not Africa's alone.

Today, I would like to echo the commitment made by our leaders at the 2005 World Summit: to "address the special needs of Africa, which is the only continent not on track to meet any of the goals of the Millennium Declaration by 2015."

This is why I welcome and commend the strong relationship that exists between the African Union and the United Nations. This can serve as a catalyst for a mutually beneficial cooperation and mobilize international solidarity in support of Africa.

On this special day, let us all join our forces and voices to the pledge made by Africans to "strengthen Africa's place in the world through strategic, balanced and responsible partnerships."